

CONSOLATION FOR POOR PETITIONERS

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A SERMON
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*“Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove:
mine eyes fail with looking upward. O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”
Isaiah 38:14*

HEZEKIAH finds fault with his prayers, but he did pray. God’s children cannot at all times speak distinctly, but they all cry. There is no true child of God that is possessed of a dumb spirit. “Behold he prayeth” may be said of each of the divine family—and place them in what circumstances you will, you might sooner call a man living and prevent his breathing, than call a man a Christian and prevent his praying. If he be living, he must breathe—if he be a Christian, he must pray.

And observe further as Hezekiah, with all the faults that he finds with his prayers, did pray, so equally certain is it that he did prevail with those imperfect prayers. He may call those prayers chattering—I have no doubt he felt them to be so—but after all, he has an answer to his prayers—he had fifteen years added to his life and therefore, his chatter were marvelously successful. From which I gather that those prayers we think the worst may turn out to be the best, and those prayers which, judged by human judgments, might be considered unworthy of the name of prayer, may, nevertheless, be so acceptable to the Most High that they shall throughout life become the fountain of our praise.

I purpose this evening to speak to you, believing that many of you have passed through the same experience as Hezekiah with regard to your prayers. I shall speak to you about his estimation, *his own estimation of his prayers*. Then we shall turn to consider *the real value of those prayers*. And then, thirdly, we shall notice *what there is that may afford us plentiful consolation* if we have to find the same fault with our petitions as Hezekiah did with his.

First, then, let us look at—

I. HEZEKIAH’S ESTIMATE OF HIS PRAYERS, for our estimate of our petitions has often been the same.

He compares his prayers to the chattering of a swallow. If we had time to spare, we might go into the question of the exact meaning, but I am content with believing that this translation will do. You know the crane makes a harsh, unmelodious, discordant sound, and when cranes are flying by night in great companies in the air, the rustic cannot see them—does not know there are any birds there, and he often hears the most extraordinary sounds which he cannot account for, and he goes home and fills the whole parish with a story of ghosts which he has seen and strange, unearthly sounds which he has heard.

The crane makes a very unmusical, harsh, discordant, grating kind of noise, and the swallow makes a kind of chattering. You know the shrill, sharp shriek, piercing like sharp needles, which the swallows make when they are going over your head towards the end of summer—not a tune, nothing very musical, but just a sharp, shrill, piercing note.

Now such, Hezekiah says his prayers were, but in addition, they were as mournful as the constant cooing of the dove. Turtledoves sometimes, if they are listened to long, are enough to make a man feel wretched to hear them—their sound is the very embodiment of the utterance of sorrow. “I did mourn,” said he, “like a dove,” and then he declares that his prayers were long, that he grew weary, that his prayers and his eyes failed with looking upwards for an answer.

Now let us put all these things together, and I gather from them that Hezekiah, first of all, in his sickness prayed often and much, *but his prayers seemed to himself to be quite meaningless*—as if they had no meaning to him and no meaning to God. You who have suffered from certain kinds of disorders will know how you tried to pray again and again, and again, but you cannot tell yourself what it is you were asking for, and when you look back in the evening at a day in which you have prayed a thousand times perhaps, it seems to you as if you had not prayed at all.

The thoughts are so tossed up and down, the mind is so incapable of its proper action, that although the prayer is genuine enough, yet to you, when you look back upon it, it seems to have no meaning in it whatever. Better to be compared to the involuntary cry of a wounded beast or bird than to anything like a reasonable, intelligent utterance of a soul that is pleading with God.

I do know—I speak from my inmost heart—what it is day after day to pray no better prayers than just that—not because I would not, but because I could not. When the head has been aching, when the bones seemed to be crushed with pain, then the soul turns to God in her bitterness, and she feels as if she did not pray at all—the utterances seem to have no meaning to herself and she fears they have no meaning to God. Meaningless, then, he thought his prayers to be.

Next, *he knew them to be disconnected*. The cry of the crane is no continuous song. You cannot make anything of it—chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter, and that is all. In the song of some birds there is a regular cadence, the note rises or falls, and you can almost commit it to paper. In fact, bird music can be committed to paper and imitated—but with the mere chattering of cranes and swallows there is no connection between one note and another, none whatever.

And oh! how many of God's people's prayers are to themselves and perhaps, really are, very disconnected indeed. They want one mercy, but before they have definitely asked for that, their need rushes in so upon them that they ask not only for that, and another, and another, and hardly know what it is that they do ask for.

They seem to have so much distress, so much sorrow, so much need, that their troubles come in troops. "Gad," say they, "a troop cometh," and they know not how to order their prayer before the Lord, and set it out item by item, and plead for this and that, and the next, and the next mercy as they did do, perhaps, in brighter days when their mind was more at home and their thoughts more under their control. He means his prayers were disconnected as well as meaningless.

And further, does not he mean that those *were very inharmonious and discordant*, just like the crane's chattering or the swallow's screams? Now sometimes when you hear a brother pray who has a great gift and at the same time has an unction of divine grace, how delightful prayer is to the Christian ear! I think I have enjoyed the prayers of some of God's people, I can say even intellectually more than I have some of the best effusions of poetry—and spiritually they have been intensely musical to my soul's ear.

I believe that the harps of heaven will be sweeter than the prayers of God's people on earth, but then they must be very, very sweet indeed, for a prayer that comes to the living soul in the power of the Holy Ghost has an element of divinity about it. The human is there, but there is something of the divine also, and very, very delightful is it to the Christian to hear his brother pray.

But ah! there are times with us when our prayers seem to have no sweetness whatever. There is all the human, and that is jarring, there is all the mortal, and that sets our teeth on edge. Every single thought we have seems to be out of order, and every word seems to be unfitted, and all that we can do is to pour out our heart like water as in a tumult bubbling forth without order, shape, or form, without anything beautiful in it that could attract the eye of God. This is what Hezekiah thought of his prayer—it was disconnected and discordant.

But further, I think that he meant that *his supplications were clamorous*, for the crane's voice is heard afar, and the shrill scream of the swallow must pierce the ear, and such were his prayers. If not sweet, yet they were cutting. If not delightful to the ear, yet they must be heard. He would be heard of

God—he cried so out of his inmost soul with such fervor, such intensity, that it was clamorous before the throne of God.

He seems to look upon it, however, not as having the orderly force that should be of importunity, but rather the clamorous power which forgets order and decorum, and only remembers the impulse of the sorrow within. Well, though we may find fault with prayer when we feel as if we clamored to God, as if we had been rough and rude before the august majesty, and had forgotten to put our shoes from off our feet, it may sometimes happen that where we think we have been irreverent, we have been most reverent of all, and where we can come back from our prayers and feel, “I have expressed myself as I ought not to have done in the bitterness and anguish of my spirit,” it may be said that the Lord has most accepted the honest outpouring of our soul. However, to Hezekiah, his prayer seemed inharmonious and clamorous.

Again, I think I see in this description *an idea of its being repetitious*—like the crane that goes on, chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter. Like the swallow that uses the same note. It is one of the marks of deep anguish in prayer that you use the same word. Our Lord Himself did it when three times He prayed using the same words. Repetition in prayer is to be avoided—it doubtless wearies those whom we expect to unite with us, but in our private supplications, when the heart feels she has a wish—one wish, but very, very few words—she may even repeat herself again and again in the very selfsame words and tone, and yet not come under the condemnation of using vain repetitions, like the heathen do.

For it is not vain repetition that makes the soul cry out before the Lord with the same note when her mind is too distracted to find a variety of notes. Now, you have made your prayers often, no doubt, just like that. You have said, “Oh! I have prayed over and over and over again the same thing. I wish I could pray like brother so-and-so at the prayer meeting, with such choice expressions and such a wonderful variety, but I alas! when I come before the Lord, I am so bowed down that just a few words and many tears, and that is all I can get out, and it is a broken prayer—there does not seem to be anything at all in it. When God Himself looks upon it, only His omniscience can spy out some little meaning, but I alas! seem as if I had no meaning at all in what I had said before the throne.”

If you look at the text again, you will see that in Hezekiah’s mind there was also the idea that his prayer was *quite unworthy of anybody’s attention*, for when a crane chatters, or when a swallow makes its twittering, nobody is expected to stand still and listen. Nobody who is going to his business would have thought of standing to inquire what the swallow means. It matters not what these birds mean by their cry, and so he seems to say, “My God, my God, You are governing the world. You are reigning in heaven. You are listening to the praise of angels. You have within Your mind grand incomprehensible designs. You are fulfilling Your marvelous decrees. What can it be to You that a poor man, a worm like myself, should lie on the bed and toss to and fro, and pour out such utter chattering as my prayers are? That You should have heard Elijah upon Carmel I can understand, for his was mighty prayer. That You should have heard David when he cried to You in such language as he had written in the Psalms, I can understand, for these were prayers that had divine inspiration in them. That you should listen to our fathers and hear their groans—that I do believe, and I think I can see a reason for it. But that You should listen to me—Lord, I might as well stand and listen to a chattering crane as expect You to stop and listen to me.”

Have not you ever thought that about your prayers? Perhaps there is some poor sinner here that thinks that of his prayer tonight. Ah! soul, God does listen to the chattering of cranes. I know He does, for I have read in His Word what is tantamount to that in the text, “He heareth the young ravens when they cry.” And surely if He hears a raven’s cry, if not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, your prayer, though it may be very indistinct and the language itself may be very unworthy of the divine ear, yet it shall command an audience and will bring down a blessing from above.

If I do not weary you in looking at this prayer, I think I am holding up a looking-glass for your own memory. I would note that Hezekiah meant in the next sentence that *his prayer was very dolorous and very mournful*. “I mourned; I did mourn as a dove. My God! My prayer once was cheerful. I dropped a

tear, but then I lifted a note of praise. I confessed my sin, but then I thanked You for Your forgiving love. But now it is all sorrow. I harp on one string and that string is all out of tune. I can do nothing but sob, and sigh, and confess my broken-heartedness, my misery, my hopelessness.”

And then he closes the description of his prayer by saying that *he was getting weary of it*. He looked up in prayer till his eyes had grown weak and failing, and he could hardly look up again. His voice was failing so that he chattered like a crane, instead of speaking like a man. His heart was failing, and so instead of hoping with the eagle’s eye that looks up and sees into the heart of God’s love, he had got the dove’s heart that was failing, and now he was led almost to give it up.

It seemed to be of little avail to pray. The heavens were as brass—no answer came from God. He waited—he had waited long—was waiting still, but as yet no blessing seemed to come. Do not some of us know what this lesson means? We remember it, when we were seeking our own salvation, how we seemed to seek in vain, and now today we are seeking some special gift from God. It may be He has delayed to answer us and we are beginning to think He will not answer us, forgetting that most true is that sentence, God never is before His time, but He never is behind. Thus I give you Hezekiah’s estimate of his own prayer.

Now, secondly, let us dwell for a minute upon—

II. THE REAL VALUE OF OUR PRAYERS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

I think we can spy a little of that out for ourselves. First of all, it is quite certain that *Hezekiah’s prayers were unaffected*, for when the crane chatters, it is never hypocritical. It chatters thus because that is the way the cranes talk. And so with the swallow—it does not try to imitate the tones of the nightingale or catch the sound of the eagle—no, it is a swallow and it makes the sound of a swallow.

And so with Hezekiah it was a strange prayer, but it was his own prayer. It might be to anybody else very wild and mystical, but to himself it was the natural effusion of his own soul—it was the truthful exposition of the state of his own heart and that is always a mark in prayer. Oh! one loathes to hear people get up and pray—pray on stilts. I have heard such prayer.

If a man is a plowman, let him pray like a plowman, and he will pray well. If a man is a scholar, let him pray like a scholar. If a man is unlettered, let him pray what he does know and not copy somebody else’s prayer. It is just the soul running out in its own language. God abhors, I believe, affectations in prayer—they are sickly to us who hear them from our fellow mortals, but what they must be to God when men trick, and toy, and adorn themselves with tinsel, and gewgaws, and a sort of spiritual rhetoric in the presence of the eternal God—what must that be? I can scarcely tell.

Certainly there was nothing of that in Hezekiah’s prayer. Whatever there was in it was real. It might be very strangely shaped, but it was of the right sort—it was the man’s own, whatever it was—not a borrowed prayer, or anything fetched out from borrowed experience. There was something good about it.

In the next place, it might have had many imperfections, but *it certainly was intense*, for though he chatters like a crane or a swallow, yet his whole heart was in it. The sound might have no charm, but the prayer had a deep sense in it, and though to himself there was no connected meaning, yet his heart was in the little brief parentheses of meaning. The little scraps and flashes of meaning that were there were sincere meanings and not affectation. And so here was another virtue in it—it was an intense prayer, a burning, fervent prayer that pierced its way even to the ears of God.

Certainly, again, as we look at it, *it was a persevering prayer*, for when he said his eyes failed, he was incidentally saying that he had looked until they failed, and that he had not left off looking, though he feared almost he should leave off looking, and he considered it would be a calamity to leave off looking up. I think there was a stern resolution in the good man’s soul. He did not leave off prayer—there was this golden, this diamond element in him, that he did continue in prayer—that he was importunate in prayer.

And further, if we take the last sentence of the verse as a specimen of the prayer, as the condensed essence of the prayer, as I think it is, what *a grand kind of praying it was, after all*. I wish our grand

prayers were half as good as Hezekiah's chattering if this was the style of it, "I am oppressed; undertake for me."

Why is that prayer so admirable? It is as full as it need be. It is brief—that is often a virtue, but it is very full. He states his case. He pleads with God. O JEHOVAH, I am oppressed. Undertake for me. You alone can deliver me. Look at my sin and undertake to bring me out of it. Hezekiah is so reliant—he seems to feel that if God does but undertake it, it is all he wants. He needs nothing—no one—only his God. "Undertake for me," and the word is, "Be surety for me—give me a promise, enter into suretyship engagement with me." Do but say it shall be so, and I will be content, even though I wait the fulfillment for a while. It is a reliant prayer.

And observe further, *it is an acquiescent prayer*. He does not put stipulations before God, but he says, "Lord, undertake for me. That is my case, only carry it through. There let it end as You will. I will give it up to You. I, a poor oppressed soul, oppressed by sickness, put my double plight of misery into Your hands and say, 'Do with me as You will, and I will be content.'"

Moreover, if I may say so, this prayer is such *an undiluted prayer*. So many people's prayers are mixed up with dependence upon something else or with secondary seeking. There are some back reckonings with God, but this is all clear and straightforward. Lord, I ask none else for help. I would not look within for help, but to You I come. I am afraid, but You, O You undertake for me. There is my hope and there alone. From You comes my salvation. "Undertake for me."

And once again, *the prayer might well be prevalent*, as it was. With all the faults he had to find with it—though he chattered like a crane, he won fifteen years of life by his chattering. His prayers were disconnected and they were discordant, and they were all the various things I have said, but for all that, in answer to these prayers, he was delivered from the gates of the grave and he went up to the house of God with joyful songs, because the Lord had heard his prayers.

Oh! it is wonderful what weak prayers can do—what imperfect prayers can do. What prayers that need to be prayed over again can do when they are washed with the precious blood of Jesus and come up with a sweet perfume of Him that is a surety for the oppressed and undertakes for us. Oh! what prevalence there is in heaven in the prayer that comes up from a sincere soul burdened here below!

Thus I have very briefly hinted at the value of the prayer which Hezekiah thought so little of. And now supposing you and I are in this state that our prayers seem to be a very poor sort of thing, I am sure they are very good.

And now let us turn to another line of teaching that is here, and ask—

III. WHAT IS THERE TO COMFORT US?

Why, there are several considerations, which I will give you briefly. And first, you find it is nowhere said that prayer will not be heard unless it is perfect, and *it is nowhere said that prayer, when it is imperfect, will be rejected*. Suppose my prayer is disconnected, did the Lord ever say that it must be connected, or else He would not hear it? Suppose my prayer is discordant, does He ever look for music in His people's cries? I dare say He finds it, for a father hears music in his baby's cries, and so may God hear music in His children's cry. But it is not there—it is only in His ears that the music is—the love of God puts it there.

What is my crime, if my prayer is clamorous? Did the Lord ever say He would not hear a clamorous prayer? Has not He rather told us a parable in which the woman gained by clamor from the unjust judge the vindication of her right? What if my prayer be repetitious? Did He ever say He would not hear me because I had no variety of expression? Oh! I must not condemn what God has not condemned. What He calls clean, let me not call common. If my prayer be sincere, then if He does not say I shall not succeed, let me hold on, and if my imperfections do not shut out my prayer according to His Word, why should I raise up a fancied reason why they should?

Remember, brethren, when we cannot pray in our hearts as we would, *there are still some promises on record that we may still plead before God*—such as this, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." My Lord has not said, "I will never leave you while your prayers are connected and full of harmony and

power.” If He had, then my soul might have despaired, but He has said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee—never.” Then let not the imperfections of my prayer drive me away. And if I do chatter, You will not say, “I cannot bear that chattering.” No, but You will still stop and listen, for You have said, I will never leave thee.” Oh! Your promises, then, shall comfort and sustain me.

Moreover, brethren, *there are many instances in Scripture of prayers which are said to be prevalent with God* that do not appear to have any of the excellencies about them that we think there ought to be in our prayers to God. Take Moses’ prayer to God at the Red Sea—I do not find that he said a word, and yet the Lord said, “Why criest thou unto me?” I dare say he was much disturbed in spirit—he had not time and opportunity in such a plight as that to pour out many sentences. But God heard it.

And there was poor Hannah when she went up to the temple. You know her prayer was such—she only moved her lips—and I am sure she must have been in a very disturbed state of mind, for Eli thought that she was drunk, and he rebuked her for being drunk, and she said, “O my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit,” and God heard Hannah’s prayer.

David often in the Psalms speaks of himself as roaring. He declares he could not look up and he pictures himself as very far gone in sorrow. But the Lord heard him. O brethren, you have cases upon cases in the Word, and many all down the ages in the history of the church, showing that the Lord hears His children’s broken prayers. Perhaps you have experienced it sometimes.

Oh! I have, and I bear witness—prayers that I would have flung on a dunghill—He has answered them. I know the reason—it was not because the prayers had anything in them, but He has answered me as if they had been prayers of the greatest of the saints. Has not it been so with you—your groans have come back to you in songs, and your tears drop back on you in showers of mercy, and your biggest bursts of agony have yet been returned to you in gracious words of promise from the Holy Ghost, the Comforter Himself?

Now these things may help to cheer and comfort you. And I want to mention these points, and one or two others, and I have done.

The next is this—we never need be discouraged about the brokenness *of our prayers* when we recollect this, “The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” It seems, then, that when I have got right out of words and cannot pray in words—when I have such great meaning that I do not find language can help me—such awful meanings that I have come to the deeps and “Deep called unto deep at the noise of God’s waterspout,” and if I speak, I speak in language which seems to be the language of the waves and billows, the deep, hollow, solemn, sounding foam, for I can say nothing else, then I am getting near the Spirit’s praying—my soul is getting tuned to its matchless intercession. The groanings we cannot utter—He can utter—and when we scarce know our own meaning, He can translate for us. He makes intercession for us according to the will of God.

The next sweet reflection is that *our prayers have to deal with the heart of a Father*. Now a little child—let us alter the illustration but in one small particular—a little child wants something and I am in the room and have no idea of what the child wants. I am rather vexed to hear its cry and it disturbs me perhaps. But there is one in the room that knows exactly what the child means as well as if it had put it into speech, though it cannot talk a note. It is the mother, who loves so much, and her love translates the indistinct language of the cry.

Now, like as a father pities his child, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. “As one whom his mother comforts,” so He comforts us. And when He hears us cry, His love is more intense to us than that of the mother to her babe, and He reads our meaning. Oh! He wants not words. He is a Spirit. He needs not sounds, as though He heard with ears—He hears the spirit’s sounds and the deep groan is often the very thunder of the spirit when the soul’s best word may be nothing better than the spirit’s whisper, after all.

Lastly, and this, perhaps, is fullest of comfort, *Christ pleads for us*. He is at the Father’s side—the man of love, the crucified. We have not only the Spirit that searches—the Spirit that knows our mind and God’s mind, and the Father’s love that reads our heart so that He knows the things we have need of

before we ask Him, but we have the man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who in His measure feels afresh what every member bears—like ourselves, a man, and therefore moved with every feeling of human sympathy.

He has gone through this brokenness of prayer Himself. He prayed like that Himself when He said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death,” and He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. His cries on the cross also—what are they but broken prayers, fragmentary prayers? He knows what sore temptation means, for He has felt the same, and He knows what these griefs and inward anguishes of prayer mean, for He has passed through them all.

Come ye, come ye, then, disconsolate to the mercy seat, still though your eyes fail, yet keep them upwards. Though you have no comfortable answer just yet, tarry at the posts of your Master’s door. Wait, for the day dawns. When the night grows darkest, the day draws nigh sooner. Wait still, and cry on still, for He hears you. To Him there is music in a sigh and beauty in a tear. The humble suppliant cannot fail. “He that asketh receiveth; he that seeketh findeth; to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”

Now do you not perceive that while very much of this discourse must belong to the child of God, yet there is a sidelight in it for the poor sinner whose prayer is of this sort? You hardly dare come even into this Tabernacle—and when you have got a seat, and the hymn is being sung, you feel you dare not sing—you cannot sing it, and if there is a promise being read out of the Bible, you say, “I cannot take it, it is not mine. I am not worthy.”

Yes, but I know what you did when nobody looked on—you did said, “God be merciful unto me a sinner.” Your Father heard you. Your Father will answer you. He sets before you tonight the atoning sacrifice of His dear Son. Jesus loves sinners. He died for sinners. He pleads for sinners. Trust Him and your sins, which are many, are forgiven you, and though you chatter like a crane or a swallow, yet shall you go your way in peace, justified far rather than the man whose long prayer is a pretence, and whose speech is but the coverlet for a hypocritical heart. God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 77; REVELATION 1:15-20

PSALM 77

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.*

The writer was in very deep trouble. The trouble forced from him a loud and bitter cry. His heart was wrung with anguish, but the cry which was the weakness of the flesh was, by divine grace, turned upward, and so became the strength of his grace. He cried, but it was to God, not to men, as many of us do. “Unto God,” he says twice over, “did I cry.” But God hears when others hear not, and blessed be His name, He answers when others cannot.

There are so many instances in which God has heard the prayer of persons in deep trouble, that the most troubled of all men ought to be encouraged to pray. Did not Jonah pray, even out of the belly of the whale, and God delivered him? Did not Manasseh pray out of the low dungeon? Great sinner as he was, God delivered him. Oh! let us believe that there is power in prayer, for God hearkens to the request of those that seek His face.

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the LORD: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.*

He would not take the common comfort which friendly words would have yielded him—his case was so desperate that he must have divine comfort and nothing else. I will not be comforted till Jesus comfort me, and this is a very good and holy resolution. I wish that some who snatch at comfort—unhealthy comfort—too soon, would resolve upon this, “My cry shall go to God, and God only, and I will take no comfort till God the Holy Spirit bring it to me.”

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled:*

Yet it was the right thing to do to remember God—the most comfortable thing in the world, and though it failed at first, it did not fail in the long run.

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.*

It is no new thing, then, for the best of God's people to be in the deepest trouble. The path which you are traveling, O mourner, is well marked with footprints.

3-5. *Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*

Turned over the experience of Your people written in Your Word to see if You ever did forsake one of them.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night:*

To see whether You did forsake me in days gone by—marked my past experience of Your faithfulness.

6-9. *I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.*

Will He be favorable no more?

Very proper questions to put. They answer themselves when we put them plainly, but while they lie festering in our spirits—misshapen things like ghosts that haunt our hearts—then they alarm us. It is well to come to plain dealings with our soul and to say, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul; why art thou disquieted within me?”

9-10. *Selah. And I said,*

When I came to reckon all up, and make a righteous judgment, when I bid my fears lie still awhile and let me listen to reason, I said—

10. *This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.*

I will remember God's faithfulness in the past, in years when I lived at His right hand and basked in the sunlight of His love—I will snatch firebrands from the altars of the past to light up the fires of today.

11-13. *I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?*

Or better, “Thy way is in holiness.” What You do is right, my God. I feared and trembled, but now I know it is so.

13-14. *Who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.*

Oh! if we could all tell out what God has done for us, we could prove it true that God has declared His strength among us. The might of His grace has He displayed in our case.

15. *Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.*

Saints in the olden times were very fond of falling back upon the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. It was a favorite subject of their contemplation—it yielded them great comfort, and very, very frequently they turned it into sacred song.

Now in heaven we shall do the same, for we shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Let not the church in modern times forget to draw consolation out of that well. Here the Psalmist gives us a description, as I think it is, of the passage of the Red Sea—giving it as a sort of type of the way in which God will always deliver His people to the world's end.

16-20. *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.*

Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

For one moment just look at this picture. You will be delivered and God will be glorified in your deliverance just as He was in the coming out of Egypt, but it will be by a mysterious way, perhaps—a way little guessed at by you. God's path will be in the great waters. You will see the power, but before you see it you will little guess how it will be displayed.

Only follow where He leads for as amidst the thunder and the lightning He led His people as calmly on as a shepherd leads his flock, so shall you, whatever happens, with JEHOVAH for your shepherd, be led safely on till you come to the celestial city. Let us sing the song of the Red Sea.

REVELATION 1:15-20

In the first fourteen verses [see Exposition—Sermon #3467], we have given to us part of the glowing description of the glories of the ascended Christ, and here it is completed.

15. *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

Seas lashed to tempests, cataracts leaping from their stupendous heights—such was the voice of Christ.

16. *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword:* For His Word is a killing thing.

16. *And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

What magnificent figures put together! We are well prepared to find that John could not long endure this majestic representation of the Lord.

17. *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*

He was not only brought to the posture of reverence, but he was so overawed that he became unconscious. It is the same person upon whose breast John had laid his head, yet now He is represented as John had never seen Him before. He was not so at the Last Supper. He was not so upon the cross. He was not so on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was not so even when He had risen from the dead, and perhaps, He will not be so when we see Him in His glory. This was a specially instructive representation of Christ, and it was too much even for the trained and educated spirit of John the Divine.

17-18. *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

This is the great consolation of the people of God when they are brought very low—that Jesus lives, that Jesus reigns, that Jesus still comforts us, and draws near to us in all the majesty of His power.

19-20. *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.